To Mr. ISRAEL HOLLY.

Dear Sir,

YOUR piece which was printed laſt fall, at *New-London*, entitled "The New-Teſta-"ment interpretation of the Old, relative to in-"fant baptiſm,—written letter-wiſe to Mr. "*Iſaac Backus*, occaſioned by his late anſwer to "Mr. F—'s * letter," has further confirmed me in a ſentiment which I adopted many years ago, viz. That a very great part of the controverſies, among good men, are cauſed by their miſtaking each others ideas. But there are ſo many things in our dark world ſtill to keep them in theſe miſtakes, that nature is ready to ſay, 'tis in vain to make any further attempts to rectify them. Yet other conſiderations have induced me to make another ſhort trial, to ſhew you wherein you have miſtaken the ſcriptures, as well as the ideas of your friend, concerning baptiſm,

You tell me, that the thing which moved you to write againſt me, was my holding forth, 'That 'in order to maintain infant baptiſm, you con-'ſtrue and interpret the New-Teſtament by the 'Old, and not the Old by the New,' p. 4. Which you think is contrary to fact with regard to your-ſelf,

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ſelf, and you ſuppoſe that if we were willing to receive the New-Teſtament interpretation of the Old, we alſo ſhould ſee warrant for that practice; and you cloſe with giving public notice to me and others, that if we ſhould pretend to anſwer you and not attend directly to your *ground-work*, you ſhould probably look upon it ſo impertinent as not to be worthy of a reply, P. 71. I readily join iſſue with you here, and deſire that all impertinences may be diſmiſſed from this diſpute.

Let then the New-Teſtament interpretation of the Old be the ground-work of all our proceedings; and how do you take that? Why, in general you ſay, 'There was a ſpiritual glory 'then in being, although veiled with a type; 'there was then the ſame ſpiritual good under 'the type, that there is now without the type. 'And all who did not ſtick in the letter, ſaw that 'ſpiritual glory, and embraced that ſpiritual 'good,' P. 7, 8. I ſay the ſame with all my heart. You obſerve that the covenant of legal ſervices and ceremonies, conſidered in themſelves, were weak and inſufficient to juſtify and ſave thoſe who attended them, unleſs they by faith looked to the end of thoſe things which were to be aboliſhed; and that the carnal Jews, who had no true faith to apprehend Chriſt in Abraham's Covenant, nor Chriſt as the ſubſtance of thoſe ſhadows, they terminated in the ſhadow inſtead of the ſubſtance, to their own deſtruction, P. 23.

And

And you illuſtrate the difference between the right uſe of thoſe things, and the Jews abuſe of them, by Paul's familiar *allegory* of the *bond-woman* and the *free*, P. 31,---34. This was the ſubject of my ſermon, which, in its ſecond edition, ſtands prefixed to what I wrote to Mr. F. and which I expreſsly refer to, as what I deſigned ſhould be part of my anſwer to him, P. 80. And how came you, Sir, to write above ſeventy pages in his behalf, and never take any notice of that ſermon, nor let the reader know that I agree with you in all theſe ſentiments? Indeed I am as far as you are from ſuppoſing that a man, who writes againſt another, is obliged to take notice of every thing the other hath ſaid; yet for him to commence a diſpute, and then recite a great number of truths, which his opponent holds as much as he does, without letting the reader know but that he denies them all; this you and all men muſt know is not fair dealing.

And now to come to the point in hand, you obſerve that in Gen. 17. 'Circumciſion was inſti-
'tuted, and directions given for forming Abra-
'ham's family into a church-ſtate.---Certain du-
'ties and privileges were annexed,---which were
'thankfully to be acknowleged and punctually
'complied with, until God ſhould pleaſe to add
'thereto more rites and ceremonies, or take
'them all away, which were meerly poſitive,
'and appoint new ones at his pleaſure,' P. 9. 10.

Theſe

Theſe have long been the ſentiments of my heart.

And you allow that if the words in Heb. 8. 9. 10. had run in oppoſition to Abraham's covenant, you would freely give up the point to me, P. 21. Why then do you ſtand ſtill to diſpute? Becauſe you ſay, "The words of inſpiration run "quite another way, even to Egypt and Mount "Sinai; therefore take notice of them again. "I will make a new covenant, *not according to* "*the covenant I made with* their fathers. But "when? *In the* DAY *I took them by the hand to* "*lead them out of the land of Egypt*," p. 22.

Anſwer. I have often taken notice of this, and I deſire you to do it once more. That was the DAY in which God added *more* rites and ceremonies to Abraham's covenant. He inſtituted the paſſover, with its various rules, and ſaid *every man ſervant that is bought for money*, WHEN *thou haſt circumciſed him*, THEN *ſhall he eat thereof. All the Congregation of Iſrael ſhall keep it.* Alſo on *that day*, and not till then, he gave orders for bringing *ſtrangers*, and *all their males*, both to circumciſion and the paſſover, *Exod.* xii, 43—48. And when the whole ſyſtem of ordinances and ceremonies were completed for that church in the wilderneſs, and the covenant was renewed with the whole nation, (many of whom had not *eyes to ſee, nor ears to hear*) juſt before they entered *Canaan*, it was to eſtabliſh them for a people unto himſelf, and that he might be

be unto them a God, AS he had ſworn unto their *father Abraham*, Deut. xxix, 4—13. So that what was done when they came out of *Egypt*, at *Sinai*, and in the plains of *Moab*, was but the completing of that conſtitution which firſt began in *Gen.* xvii; and a literal fulfilment of that promiſe to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy ſeed after thee.* And ſince the Holy Ghoſt ſays, the new covenant is *not according* to that covenant made with their fathers, how do you dare to ſay, "The gentile church is grafted "into the *ſame* covenant—as the Jewiſh church "once ſtood in!" p. 50.

I am ſenſible that this is the root of the controverſy, and you obſerve truly, that one blow at the root of a tree of vile fruit, would do as much good as many againſt the branches, p. 52. But if inſtead of a vile root you ſhould be found ſtriking againſt the rock, you will find it much worſe than loſt labour. You know that infant baptiſm is not expreſſed in the Bible, but you ſuppoſe that when the head of a family believed, and was baptized, that he afterwards brought his houſhold upon his faith, and this is the root your cauſe ſtands upon; but the plaineſt precept for a new profeſſor of religion, to bring his houſhold into the church upon his faith, that we have in all the ſacred oracles, was given on *the day* that *Iſrael* came out of *Egypt*; and ſince the Lord ſays, his new covenant is *not according* to that

covenant

covenant, and the main point of difference which he deſcribes is, that *all* who are in the new covenant ſhall *know him*, from the *leaſt to the greateſt*, is it not ſurpriſing that you ſtand where you do?

However, ſince you are ſo kind as to tell us what you think cauſes our miſtake, I have a notion of making a little attempt to requite my friend in the ſame way.

1. You ſuppoſe that we had taken our principles upon *tradition*, and when we came ſeriouſly to ſearch the ſcriptures, we never took the *ideas* belonging to the *words* there uſed, p. 5. I return the compliment; for, as the *philoſophy* and *vain deceit*, after the *traditions of men*, which the Coloſſians were warned againſt, were attempts to ſubject them to *ordinances*, which by thoſe means were drawn from the *handwriting* which Chriſt had *blotted out*, and *taken out of the way*: Col. 2, 8, 14---22. So I think it is evident that you have not got ſo clear of thoſe traditions as you imagine you have. My attempt to explain thoſe ambiguous terms, which that deceitful philoſophy invented, and which tradition and not ſcripture has handed down to us, viz. of Abraham's covenant being the covenant of Grace, and that believers now are in the ſame covenant, has carried your mind away into ſuch treatment of your brethren, as would ſhock you in other affairs. Mr. F. had laid thoſe ambiguous terms as the foundation

foundation of his diſcourſe; and I obſerved, that in order to ſettle this matter it was needful to *explain* what we meant by them, and ſaid, 'I 'fully concur with Mr. *F.* that "ſince *Adam*, 'our firſt natural head fell from the covenant 'which he was placed in, the tenor of which 'was, *do and live*; *tranſgreſs and die*; the Moſt 'High has never come to commune with any 'of the race of *Adam*, nor to offer good to 'them, but only in the ſecond head, the Lord 'Jeſus Chriſt." 'And if by covenant of grace, 'we mean the glorious plan of ſalvation, which 'was laid in the divine mind from eternity, and 'was diſcovered at *ſundry times*, and in *divers* '*manners* to the *fathers* in the Old-Teſtament, 'and is brought in clear light in the New; and 'that one of thoſe *divers manners* was by *Abra-* '*ham*'s covenant: In this we have no difference. 'But if by covenant of grace, he means the *con-* '*ſtitution* and limits of the Jewiſh church, which 'deſcended in the line of *natural generation*, tak- 'ing in with the parents all their natural off- 'ſpring, which is evidently his meaning; in this 'I cannot concur with him for theſe reaſons.' One of which is, becauſe, "The tenor of *Abra-* "*ham*'s covenant enjoined conditions, and "works to be performed by men; the neglect "of which expoſed them to be *cut off from their* "*people*, becauſe they had *broken* that *covenant*, "Gen. 17. 14. therefore the *letter* of it was, "*do*

" *and live*; and the reaſon here given for ſetting " of it aſide is, *becauſe they continued not in it,* " *and I regarded them not, ſaith the Lord.* But " the tenor of the new covenant is, *I will be to* " *them a God, and they ſhall be to me a people,* " Heb. 8. 9. 10." P. 52—54. of my book " theſe are my words; but you pick out a few " of them, without either of theſe texts of ſcrip- " ture, and then ſay; " I don't know what you " really think *Abraham*'s covenant was. Mr. *F,* " ſaid it was *the covenant of grace,* but you op- " poſe him in that, and mean to contradict " him," p. 11. And ſo becauſe I oppoſe that's being called *The covenant of Grace,* which perſons come into by *natural generation* (for in no other ſenſe did I oppoſe him) I ſay, becauſe I oppoſe that language of tradition, you go on to declare me, and my brethren through me, to be ſo hetredox as to pretend, " That the *Sinai* diſ- " penſation was given of God, as the covenant " of works, and that the Jewiſh church was " formed by God upon the covenant of works, " and circumciſion inſtituted of God as the ſeal * " of the covenant of works," P. 35. And you go ſo far as to ſay that, " according to the bap- " tiſts, the true church never had exiſtence un- " til the goſpel day," p. 45. with a great deal more

* Here note that in my 53. page, it was by miſtake printed *ſeal*, where I wrote *ſeat*.

more of like nature; which are as real breaches of the ninth commandment, as were ever uttered by man; and which appears more ſurpriſing from you, ſince you own that the apoſtle, in the Hebrews, "uſes the words *covenant* and *teſ-*
"*tament*, as terms ſynonimous; and therefore
"is not there diſtinguiſhing ſo directly between
"the covenant of works and the covenant of
"grace, as he is between the Old and New-
"Teſtament diſpenſations, P. 23." If ſo, then how came you to abuſe your brethren as you have done, only becauſe they oppoſe the language that aſſerts, that both the Old and New-Teſtament church are in the *ſame* covenant! How did it grieve my heart, to ſee you thus carried away with tradition, to violate divine rule!

2. You ſuppoſe we miſtake in not diſtinguiſhing between the external adminiſtration of the covenant, and its internal efficacy, P. 41. But how do you prove it? You make much of *Rom.* 4. 11. but ſay of us that we "ſeem to be as
"much afraid to have this text held up before
"us, as we would be of a loaded cannon; and ſay,
"I never yet was able to obtain a rational an-
"ſwer," p. 37. To which I ſhall ſay, that neither my courage nor reaſon have at all fled at the ſight of this text, ſo but that I ſhall come ſo near as to take your own dialect, ſince you can't underſtand ours. I take it that *Paul* there ſpeaks of the internal efficacy of the covenant on *Abra-*

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ham's heart. You agree with me that circumciſion was a type of Chriſt's death, and of an inward change, p. 38. 39. Well, *Abraham* had experienced the internal efficacy of theſe things before circumciſion was appointed; therefore it was a *ſeal* to him of *the faith which he had, yet being uncircumciſed*, that he might be the *father of all them that believe*, whether circumcited or not: From whence the apoſtle argues againſt the continuance of thoſe types, now the antitype is come. But what a poor figure does his argument make, in the dreſs men would now put it into? To ſay, 'The covenant of which circum-'ciſion was a *ſign*, is the *ſame* to all *Abraham*'s 'ſpiritual ſeed, as it was to his *natural* poſterity:' What argument could be ſtronger to prove that all his ſpiritual ſeed ought to circumciſe their children! The very principle which the Apoſtle was there oppoſing with all his might!

Circumciſion was a *ſign* or *token* of the covenant which conſtituted the Jewiſh church, and it is never called a *ſeal* to them in all the bible; but it was a ſeal to *Abraham* of the faith, which he before had in the promiſe of Chriſt, and of ſalvation through him, both to Jews and Gentiles; which promiſe was given him in *Gen.* 12. 3. and 15. 5. 6. to which places all the apoſtle's arguments in *Rom.* 4. and *Gal.* 3. expreſsly refer, and not to *Gen.* 17. as you imagine. And if you ſearch chronology, you will find it generally,

ly, if not univerſally, agreed to by the learned, that the 430 years, which the apoſtle mentions, is to be reckoned from *Abraham*'s firſt call out of his own country, when the promiſe was given him of being *heir of the world*, which promiſe was not through the law, but through Chriſt and his righteouſneſs, *Rom.* 4. 13. *Gal.* 3. 14—17. Now after his juſtification by faith in this promiſe, he went and took the *bond-woman*, and had a ſon by her, who was 13 years old when circumciſion was inſtituted, and he was the firſt of *Abraham*'s ſeed that partook of it, which we have ſeen was an allegory of the jewiſh covenant, in diſtinction from that which the goſpel-church is in, *Gal.* 4. 24.

3. You ſay, "The baptiſts don't diſtinguiſh "between the true nature, and right improve-"ment of the ceremonial inſtitutions, and how "the Jews in general did improve them, p. 41. But thou that teacheſt others, teacheſt thou not thyſelf? The conſtitution and ordinances of the Jewiſh church were ſhadows of good things to come, and *Abraham*'s firſt ſon that was circumciſed, being born only by ordinary generation, and the other by ſupernatural power, of parents *as good as dead*, according to *promiſe*, were types of the difference between the children of his *fleſh*, and the *elect*; and it is expreſsly among the *election of grace* that believing gentiles are *grafted in*, Rom. 9. 8. and 11. 5. 17. and this grafting,

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if we compare it with *John* 15. 1—6. is into Chriſt by faith, and into his church by a perſonal profeſſion of it; for, *with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation*, Rom. 10. 10. But if any who are received into the church prove fruitleſs, they will be *broken off*, and *taken away*, while living branches are *purged*, that they may bring forth *more fruit*. This appears to be the true nature, and right improvement of the ſhadow and the ſubſtance, and the true diſtinction between them; but the judaizing chriſtians were zealous ſtill to keep up a viſible diſtinction between *Jews by nature*, and *ſinners of the Gentiles*, and its influence was ſo pernicious as to carry both *Peter* and *Barnabas* away with *diſſimulation*, Gal. 2. 11—15. which moved *Paul* to withſtand them to the face. And he proceeds to ſhew that all are under the *curſe* of the broken law, till they are *redeemed* by Chriſt, and receive the *promiſe of the Spirit through faith*, which are the *bleſſings of Abraham*, that were to *come on the Gentiles*. And he ſays, "The ſcripture hath concluded *all* under ſin, that the *promiſe* by faith of Jeſus Chriſt might be given to *them that believe*; and IF ye be Chriſt, THEN are ye Abraham's ſeed, and heirs *according to the promiſe*, Gal. 3, 10,—14. 22. 29.

Promiſe of what? Of *remiſſion of ſins*, and the *gift of the Holy Ghoſt*; and *as many* of the Jews and

and their *children* as were *called*, ſo as *gladly to receive* this *word*, were *baptized* and *added* to the church, Acts 2. 38—41. This is the *goſpel* which was preached unto Abraham, *before* circumciſion or other rites of the law were inſtituted; and was now freely preached both to Jews and *Gentiles*, after thoſe rites were aboliſhed; and I find not a word of any of them being baptized, till they profeſſed faith in that promiſe: Yet you muſt needs go back to the jewiſh conſtitution, and from thence frame a plea for bringing your houſhold upon your faith. You, Sir, go back to the "federal holineſs" of the Old-Teſtament, to interpret the word *holy* by, in 1 Cor. 7. 14, p. 50. Though that Old-Teſtament holineſs is expreſsly given as a reaſon why they ſhould make *no marriages* with other nations, Deut. 7. 3. 6. And the ſame reaſon is given againſt eating *unclean meats*, Deut. 14. 3—21; neither is there a whit more of conſiſtency or of juſtice, in going back to that church, for the meaning of the word *holy* in this text, than there is for the meaning of the word *ſanctified* in this, and alſo in 1 Tim. 4. 3—5. which both prove that ſort of holineſs to be out of date. And by the way, I would not have you forget, that the reaſon why Abraham's ſeed might not be circumciſed till eight days old, was becauſe their mothers were *unclean* ſeven days, Levit. 12. 2. 3. And as all their males were to be circumciſed as

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ſoon as they were clean; ſo, if any man of them was *clean* and not in a journey at the appointed ſeaſon of the paſſover, and *forbore* to keep it, even the ſame ſoul ſhould be cut off from his people, Numb. 9. 10. 13. So that though natural birth or purchaſe for money brought perſons into that church, yet it is your miſtake in ſuppoſing they were circumciſed only upon a *relative* right, p. 54. Perſonal qualifications were required for both ordinances; and a neglect of either of them expoſed them to be cut off from that church; but to have circumciſed a child before he was eight days old would have been a tranſgreſſion; and ſo it would to have offered a calf, lamb or kid, before that age, becauſe God would have no *unclean* thing offered to him, Exod. 22. 30. Levit. 22. 27. As to the ſpiritual things which theſe were types of, in them I ſuppoſe we agree: And ſo we do about the manner of eating the paſſover; but for you to blend type and antitype together as you do, p. 56. is not juſt. Neither is it ſo for you to ſay, we ſecretly take it for granted, that it is not a perſon's ſin to remain in unbelief, p. 58. I hold as fully as you do, that it was a damning ſin in every jew, if he did not truly believe in the Meſſiah to come, who is the ſubſtance of thoſe types; and then it muſt ſurely be an aggravated ſin not to believe in him that is come. But how ſhort-ſighted are we! While you attempt to diſcover

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my secret mistake, you beg the whole question between us. You say, "The baptized child of "a true believer is, *by God's appointment* and the "parent's act, brought under the bond and seal "of the covenant," p. 61. This is all the question between us; only prove that it is *God's appointment*, and I will give up the dispute in a minute. Here the point turns.

I fully agree with you, that there is an essential difference between moral duties and positive institutions. Morality in all ages is in its nature as immutable as the perfections of the deity; but institutions of worship depend intirely upon his sovereign will, and positive appointment; and I like well your description of God's first forming *Abraham*'s family into church-state, with certain duties and privileges annexed, which were to be thankfully received, and punctually observed, "until God should please to add there-"to more rites and ceremonies, or take them "all away,—and appoint new ones at pleasure." Now the single point between us is, whether he has *taken away* that *covenant* which constituted that church, and appointed a *better covenant, which is established upon better promises*; or whether the covenant is the *same*, and only changed into different hands, with the appointment of different ordinances. The apostle observes that the *first covenant had ordinances of divine service*; but he does not confound ordinances and cove-

nant together as you ſeem to do, p. 23. No, he keeps them diſtinct; and ſince he ſo often diſtinguiſheth the covenants as well as ordinances, by calling one *Old*, the other *New*; the one *firſt*, the other *ſecond*, and ſays Chriſt *taketh away the firſt, that he may eſtabliſh the ſecond*, Heb. 9. 1. and 10. 9. I ſhould think your evidence was hardly ſufficient to prove that a man "*boaſts* as "being by way of *eminence* in the cauſe of God," if he did uſe ſome "peremptory airs," p. 67. in aſſerting that, *old* and *new*, *firſt* and *ſecond* are not the *ſame!* Eſpecially when the *firſt* muſt be *taken away* in order to *eſtabliſh the ſecond!*

You allow ſome of the babtiſts to be "very "judicious Chriſtians in other reſpects, yet think "that in this particular (about children's being "in covenant) one and all of them may juſtly "be termed near-ſighted people," p. 67. If ſo, then I am ſorry that you happened to be ſo much troubled with the ſame calamity, as not to ſee, that though I ſuppoſed the principle of holding children to be born in the covenant of grace tended to a crying *peace, peace, when there was no peace*; yet that I expreſsly ſaid in my 66. page, that I was ſatisfied Mr. *F.* did not commonly teach perſons in ſuch a way: Had you but ſeen that, it might have prevented your complaining of me, as though I charged ſuch language upon *all* parents, who practiſe infant baptiſm without *diſtinction*, p. 64. But it ſeems a little remarkable,

able, that, while you are trying to clear the principle of that language, by ſaying, "When we act "up to our principles, we are ſo far from crying "peace, peace, to our baptized children, that "we cry, wrath! wrath!—if they go on in ſin," p. 65. Yet you can't get but three pages forward before you call them "the little children of "God's *gracious* covenant." And how near was your ſight when you ſaid, "although there "is *no mention* made of *infants*, yet houſholds "include infants, and that is *ſufficient* for our "purpoſe?" p. 51. What! did you never ſee a houſhold without an infant in it? If you have, your argument is like that of the miniſter of *Harwinton*, which you juſtly obſerve in your letter to him, p. 23. was no more concluſive, than to argue, that if a man has got *money*, he has certainly got *gold*, tho' it is well known that the word includes *copper* as really as gold; and you truly tell him that he "was not over-ſharp," if he did not ſee this to be the nature of his argument.

And, my friend, how ſharp was you, to ſuppoſe you could read infants in *Lydia*'s houſe? When by the book ſhe appears to be the head of the family, and there is not the leaſt mention of her ever having either huſband or child. Again how near was your ſight, that you could not ſee that there is juſt the ſame proof that *all* the gaolers houſe were taught and believed, as there is that

that *all* were baptized? *Acts* 16. 15. 32—34, 40. And how ſharp was you at reckoning *figures*, when you concluded that the 8 ſouls in 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. amounted to a proof for a "houſholder to "*bring* his children to baptiſmal *ſprinkling?*" p. 51. as if *Noah* had *brought* his wife, and his ſons and their wives, in his *arms* to be ſprinkled with rain! Whereas the ſacred record informs us, that they all *went into the ark, as God had commanded* Noah, *and the Lord ſhut him in*; where they were *covered* from the rain, and *ſaved* thro' the *flood*, Gen. 7. 7—16.

Once more, how careful was you to ſee that your words and ideas went together, in your attempt to pull down my pride? As I had wrote three or four times on this controverſy without being anſwered, you repreſent me as conceiting I "had ſtruck all with ſuch intimidating fear, that "there was no one ſtripling left who dare en-"counter with this great *Goliah*, that has been "theſe ſeveral times defying one branch of the "army of the living God, viz. the little child-"ren of his gracious covenant," p. 68. I have been deeply ſenſible theſe many years that pride is as bad an enemy as any I have to conflict with and would gladly improve your help as well as others to keep him down; but have I been defying infants! I had no ſuch thought. The firſt piece I wrote on this ſubject was the ſermon which you have now paſſed over without any corrections;

corrections; and at different times ſince I have attempted to point out the miſtakes of three miniſters; and is this defying infants? And as to pride, I can freely leave the impartial public to judge between this ſuppoſed *Goliah*, and the *ſtripling* who has ventured out againſt him, but has failed ſo much as to the ſkill he *conceited* he had, that inſtead of a real perſon, all his artillery is diſcharged at a man of ſtraw of his own making. For I ſolemnly declare, I know of no man on earth who holds, 'That the jewiſh church was 'formed by God upon the covenant of works.' Yet your whole book is directed againſt ſuch an one, which therefore muſt be only a creature of your own brain.

But, my friend, it is too late in the day to make a jeſt of theſe matters. I muſt come to deal yet more ſeriouſly with you. You begin and end your letter, with expreſſions of reſpect to me, and tell me, you 'truſt you ſay it truly, 'without nauſeous fawning, or criminal flattery;' yet, in the ſpace between, you have covered my ſentiments with a falſe dreſs, without attending to my explanation of them, and then you have not only compared me to proud *Goliah*, but have alſo accuſed me with great ambiguity, which you ſay to you is very probable I 'uſe with *deſign*,' p. 66. If this be not what the ſcripture calls a *ſpeaking wickedly for God*, I know not what is; yet [illegible]ing the baptiſts has been branded

handed down by tradition ever ſince *Luther's* day. Tho' while I deal thus plainly with you for your faults, I would by no means forget to give you credit, for your guarding againſt another branch of *deceitful* philoſophy, that has been practiſed as long as the other: Which is the bringing up the characters of men, as a teſt to decide what is the truth of God. This has moved many to violate the rule of truth and equity, in order to keep up a bad character of the baptiſts, and a good one of their opponents, and many of our baptiſts fathers in this land, have neglected to do juſtice to themſelves, and to poſterity, by detecting thoſe evils; and the ſore trials and *ſiftings* that I endured by ſuch means, with the authority of that command, *When thou art converted ſtrengthen thy brethren*, have, if I know my heart, been the chief motives to all I have written on this ſubject. I ſay, I would not forget this cautiouſneſs that you have ſhewn, p. 64. which your friend *F.* did not.

And tho' you ſuppoſe my mind is 'narrow-'ed up with rigid ſuperſtition,'* becauſe I hold that Chriſt has not only appointed the ordinance of baptiſm; but alſo the *manner* of its adminiſtration,

* Superſtition is the having our *fear* toward God influenced by the *precepts of men*, inſtead of his commands; and as baptiſm is the duty of every believer, have you not reflected upon him in ſaying, 'His word has revealed this

ſtration, ſo that when men have done ſomething elſe under that name, it is not the thing which he commanded; yet I am fully ſenſible that I never enjoyed ſo much freedom from a narrow rigid temper, as I have ſince my preſent eſtabliſhment; and never was more fully perſuaded than I am now, of the real piety and eminent uſefulneſs of many pedobaptiſts, both in former and latter times; whom therefore I would ever reſpect and honor; but I hope never to give up the truth for any man.

One thing more I muſt beg your attention to, and I ſhall conclude, which is this; we are none of us willing to be thought fond of controverſy; you

" point more *darkly* than ſome others?" p. 7. When in reality the ſcriptures are ſo light, that all the power of ſuperſtitution has never been able to *darken* them, ſo but that you and all are forced to allow, that *dipping* is *baptiſm*; yet now you call me rigid and ſuperſtitious, only becauſe I cannot allow *ſprinkling* to be baptiſm, when I cannot find one text in the bible to ſupport ſuch a meaning of the word. And as to the danger of injuring our health, which ſome plead; a noted phyſician in our nation, ſpeaking of *cold-bathing*, ſays, 'I cannot ſufficiently admire, how it ſhould 'ever have come into ſuch diſuſe, eſpecially among *chriſ-* 'tians, when commanded by the greateſt Law-giver that 'ever was, under the direction of God's holy ſpirit, to his 'choſen people, and perpetuated to us, in the *immerſion* at 'baptiſm, by the ſame ſpirit, who, with infinite wiſdom in 'this, as in every thing elſe that regards the *temporal* and 'eternal felicity of his creatures, combines their *duty* with 'their eternal *happineſs*.' Dr. Cheyne's eſſay of *health* and *long life*, p. 100. 101.

you ſay, 'I am far from deſiring to continue it.' But how ſhall we prevent its continuance? You own you have not 'attended directly to my plan, 'and the ground-work thereof,' yet tell me that if I don't *attend directly* to yours, you ſhall look upon it impertinent, p. 71. and who diſcovers moſt pride here? The want of attending to my plan has cauſed you to abuſe your brethren as you have done; and if I write again, I ſhall, according to your notion, give another proof of being a proud, contentious perſon; yet if I do not, even honeſt people, who have no better means of information than your writings, will be apt to think the people called baptiſts are ſuch abſurd creatures as to hold, that there was only the ſhadow of a church in the Old-Teſtament, and that 'the true church never had exiſtence till the goſpel day.' I ſay, they will be apt to think ſo of the whole denomination; for your reproach, as *Eſther* ſaid of *Haman*'s decree, is laid againſt *all my people*; to which you add an inſinuation of 'deſigned ambiguity,' in my defence of this cauſe: Than which, what could you have ſaid worſe of an honeſt man? And which a due *attention* to what I have wrote would doubtleſs have prevented. And muſt this ſword devour forever? It will ſurely be bitterneſs in the latter end.

One method however occurs to my mind, which I think to take, to try to draw you out of your entrenchment under the language of tradition, and

and to prevent any further complaint of my trying to hide my ſentiments. I believe that Abraham was born a- others are, under a broken law, and that the *goſpel* of ſalvation through his *ſeed, which is Chriſt*, was *preached* to him, and that he *believed* therein to his juſtification and ſalvation, which was the *covenant confirmed of God in Chriſt*, that the *law could not diſannul*, Gal. 3. 8. 16. 17. But I declare boldly, that neither his firſt nor his ſecond birth gave him any right to circumciſe either himſelf or his ſeed. All the right he had to do that, was by a poſitive inſtitution many years after, by a covenant which formed his *houſhold* into a church, with circumciſion for the token of their membership, from whence the Holy Ghoſt calls it *The Covenant of Circumciſion*, Act. 7. 8. but never the covenant of grace. I believe that the choice of that nation, for God's only viſible church in the world, was a type of the *holy nation*, * of his elect among all nations, and that the circumciſion of all who were, either by birth or purchaſe, incorporated into that church, was a type of Chriſt's ſhedding his blood to purchaſe his choſen, and of their regeneration, by his grace. † And when Chriſt by his death aboliſhed circumciſion, he alſo *took away* the *covenant* which it was a token of, and made a *new covenant* with Abraham's believing children, *not according to the covenant* he made with their *fa-*

 thers.

* Pet. 2. 9. † Rom. 2. 29. Phil. 3. 3. Col. 2. 11.

thers. He did not *caſt away his people which he foreknew*; no, they were before in his covenant, but now he made a *new covenant* with them, which *broke off* all Abraham's unbelieving poſterity, and *grafted* in the believing gentiles among the elect Jews.* Thus he inſtituted a new church-ſtate of the *houſhold of God*,* and appointed the ordinance of baptiſm as a token of membership therein, and ordered his miniſters to adminiſter the ſame to ſuch, and only ſuch, as made a credible profeſſion of the new-birth, and of ſaving faith in Jeſus Chriſt.† And as natural generation brought perſons into Abraham's covenant, which is called *everlaſting*, ſo the natural poſterity of Aaron, and none but they, were appointed by a like *everlaſting covenant* to miniſter at God's altar in that church,‡ both of which were types of the *lively ſtones*, the *holy prieſthood*, of which Chriſt's *ſpiritual houſe* is built. 1 *Pet.* 2. 5. Therefore I challenge you and all men upon earth, to ſhew, if you can, any evidence from the divine oracles, to entitle the natural offspring of believers to baptiſm, before they perſonally profeſs faith in Chirſt, any more than there

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* Rom. 11. 2. 5. 17.
* Eph. 2. 19—22.
† Mat. 28. 19. 20. Mar. 16. 15. 16. Acts 8. 37. Rom. 10. 10.
‡ Numb. 25. 13.

there is to confine the goſpel miniſtry to the children of miniſters. ‖

This is the plan I am upon, and this is my teſtimony, and if you or any other can ſhew any part of it to be contrary to truth, do it by all means; but if any accuſe me of knowingly holding any thing contrary hereto, they in that reſpect join with the old accuſer of the brethren, let them otherwiſe be ever ſo pious: And (though moſt unworthily) I hope to overcome them by the blood of the lamb, and by a cloſe adherence to the teſtimony of truth, even unto the death. If you call this boaſting, you have compelled me; and it is only a hope of putting ſome ſtop to the fire of contention, which abounds more in your part of the country than ours, concerning the covenant and a right to ordinances; or at leaſt a ſtop to my concern therein, that has brought me to this length.

Some would lay the blame of theſe contentions to thoſe called new-lights, ſome to the ſeparates, and others to baptiſts; but my opinion is, that the power of the goſpel was the firſt means of breaking up the carnal peace which our land was ſettled into, by which great members were cut

‖ I find the apoſtle makes uſe of this very argument, to prove to the Hebrews, that Jeſus has *diſannulled* the ceremonial law, of which circumciſion was a part, and has introduced a *better teſtament, a better covenant* than that which the Jewiſh church ſtood in, Heb. 7. 18. 22 and 8. 6.

cut off from nature's ſtock, and grafted into Chriſt. Yet many of them flocked into churches which were very much blended with the world. And thoſe who knew what they were doing in the ſeparation, came out to have the church a diſtinct body from the world, and I ſuppoſe they all, to a man, teſtified againſt what is called the half-way covenant; though moſt of them did not ſee that they only ſtruck at the branches, and not at the root of that evil, while they ſtill applied the token of the goſpel covenant to infants, which had no other birth than that which brings us all into this world. And when ſome of us were convinced of this, and acted accordingly, Mr. F's letter, and yours, will ſhew how we have been treated by our brethren: And lately this controverſy has appeared, and is carried to a great height, among thoſe called ſtanding miniſters.

Dr. Bellamy has written a number of times againſt the half-way covenant, and has taken much pains to ſhew that the covenant which is publicly owned, implies a profeſſion of ſaving grace; and therefore, that if the perſon who makes the profeſſion has no grace, his profeſſion is a lie. But many have tried to avoid this conſequence. At length Mr. Moſes Mather publiſhed a pamphlet, to prove that the viſible church is in covenant with God, according to Abraham's convenant, and conſequently that all who

who are in covenant ought to be in the uſe of all the means and ordinances of it, in order to obtain grace and ſalvation. Againſt this the Dr. wrote 80 pages, and becauſe Mr. M. left the word *grace* out of his deſcription of the external covenant, he charges him with "giving up the "grounds," on which Meſſieurs *Dickinſon*, *Clark* and *Boſtwick*, vindicated infant baptiſm. § And the Dr. repreſents Mr. M's covenant to be ſo void of any privilege that he ſays, * "He "has no right, upon his ſcheme, to the apoſtles "anſwer in Rom. 3. 1. 2. For, as to *the oracles "of God*, which he claims for one of the chief "privileges of his external covenant, he will "grant, that they are common to the unbap-"tized, i. e. the unbaptized have as good a "right to read and hear the word of God, as the "baptized have; and as good a right to believe "and embrace the goſpel. For, by Chriſt's "laſt commiſſion, *the goſpel is to be preached to "all nations*; yea, to *every creature:* And that, "previous to, and in order to prepare men for "baptiſm, Mar. 16. 15. 16. So that, there is "not the leaſt need of being in his external co-"venant, in order to have as good a right to "hear and believe, and be juſtified by the goſpel, "as any man on earth has: *For there is no dif-*

ference,

§ Dr. Bellamy's firſt piece againſt Mr. Mather, page 9.
* Page 75.

" *ference*, Rom. 3. 22. compare Mat. 10. 5, 6. " and 28. 19."

Well done doctor! here you talk reaſon and ſcripture too. But if a ſtranger might be ſo bold as to aſk, whether natural generation conveys grace to your child or not? 'Tis likely the anſwer would be, no, by no means: And if it might be farther aſked, whether you hold to the popiſh doctrine, of the ſacraments, conferring grace by the *operation or work done?* Would you not reſent the ſuggeſtion with abhorrence?——— If neither natural generation, nor what parents and miniſters have *done*, in baptizing children, confer grace upon them, where are they before God gives it to them but in Mr. Mather's *external* covenant? And to imagine that they have a better claim to the ſpirit's influence to make the means of grace effectual, than other ſinners; this the Dr. truly obſerves is inconſiſtent with God's *having mercy on whom he will have mercy.* †

Mr.

† Ibid. p. 76. As to your ſaying, " The queſtion is " not whether baptiſm ſecures the ſalvation of the child of " a believer, nor whether it enables the child to believe; " but whether the child is not hereby brought under an " additional obligation to believe and repent?" Which you aſſert he is, p. 61. I anſwer, that all God's appointments add to our obligation; but the queſtion between us is, whether infant baptiſm be his appointment or not? And to beg the queſtion and then argue from it is poor buſineſs. As to God's precious promiſes to his ſaints, of the out-pouring of his ſpirit on

Mr. M. has publiſhed a reply, in which he ſays, "It is evident, that it is not from the "covenant of grace, ſtrictly taken, but from a "*particular poſitive inſtitution*, that the viſible "churh derives its being. It is the covenant of "grace that compoſeth, and unites the ſeveral "members of Chriſt's ſpiritual body, but the vi-"ſibe body of Chriſt is compoſed, and united "by a particular inſtitution." And he charges the doctor with "uſing the argument of the *Anabaptiſts*," becauſe he does not regard this diſtinction. ‡ Thus a frightful name that ſuperſtition has impoſed upon us, ſerves each party in their turn, in the room of argument, though often to the injury of truth: For it is not truth to ſay, we do not obſerve this diſtinction. And while they both try to ſupport their ſentiments by Abraham's covenant, yet neither of them dare act up to it. For Mr. M. who goes the farthest

their children, I truſt I prize them as much as you do: But obſerve their order, particularly that you mention, p. 26. Firſt the ſpirit is poured on their offspring, which gives life and cauſes them to *ſpring up*, and then they profeſs his name, and *ſubſcribe with their hand unto the Lord*, Iſa. 44. 3—5. The Dr. knows, by the two laſt texts he quotes, that the apoſtles were limited in their firſt commiſſion, to preach to none but ſuch as were in Abraham's covenant; but by their laſt, they were commanded to teach all nations; and how great a difference between the covenants does this diſcover!

‡ Mr. Mather's ſecond piece on the covenant, printed at New-Haven, 1770, p. 77. 78.

theſt, obſerves, that Abraham's covenant, as it was renewed in Deut. 29. took in all that nation, whether *preſent* or *abſent*, and was extended "even to ſuch whoſe *conſent* to it was not ſo "much as aſked." § Yet as to our times he ſays, "It is allowed on all hands, that it is an "outward profeſſion, confirmed with the ap-"pointed ſeal by which a man is made a mem-"ber of the viſible church." ‖ Thus he appears to know, that the covenant now is not the ſame that the Jewiſh church ſtood in, and yet you all will plead that 'tis the ſame. We know as well as that gentleman, that the gentiles

§ Page 72. ‖ Page 77. What this profeſſion is, he leaves in the dark, and dwells chiefly on the negative, that it cannot be a profeſſion of ſaving grace; and aſſerts that the *only poſſible method* of erecting a viſible church in that way, muſt be by covenanting upon an *abſolute certainty*, p. 82. This is a plea they dwell much upon; though you truly obſerve to the miniſter of Harwinton, that 'tis full as much againſt them as us; for 'tis as much the divine prerogative to know certainly that a man has moral ſincerity, and ſpeculative faith, when he profeſſes it, as it is to know one has gracious ſincerity, and ſaving faith when he profeſſes that. And as to a certainty of our own ſtate, Mr. Edwards againſt Mr. Williams, goes much further; for he proves it to be a maxim with Mr. Stoddard, and with proteſtants in general, that *abſolute certainty* of the ſcriptures being true, is attained only by their ſaving power on our hearts. And if ſo, then 'tis ſelf-evident that *abſolute certainty* of our having a right to a ſcripture-ordinance, cannot be had, without ſaving faith. So that this argument from certainty,

to the same body that was

were added in being under the former diſpenſation; yet for him to ſay as he does, that "There "is not the leaſt hint in all the apoſtles writings, "that it was a *new church*," is directly againſt the other text that he brings, which ſays, Chriſt has *aboliſhed* thoſe Jewiſh laws and ordinances, for to make *in himſelf* of twain one *new man*. Eph. 2. 13—15. and 3. 6. The body is the ſame that exiſted under the types; but a *new covenant*, a new poſitive inſtitution of a church-ſtate, is made with them *not according* to that made with their fathers. And I have no hope of their ever bringing this controverſy to an end, till they will come to allow, that the apoſtles knew as well how to expreſs their own meaning, as any now do how to expreſs it for them.

And as I have already proved, that both the houſe of Abraham, and of Aaron, were types of the *houſhold of God*, whereof the goſpel-church is conſtituted; and as none might miniſter at, or partake with the altar, but Aaron's poſterity, and the apoſtle ſays of goſpel-believers, we have an altar whereof they have *no right to eat*, who ſerve the tabernacle, Heb. 13. 10. I leave you to conſider what you are doing, while you claim a *right* to bring your children to a goſpel-ordinance upon Abraham's covenant, and yet pay no re-

would only exclude the doubting Chriſtian, till he attained aſſurance; while it lays a *certain* bar againſt every unregenerate perſon under heaven, till he is ſavingly enlightned.

gard to Aaron's covenant, which was equally *everlaſting*, and much more ſtrict; for one admitted of proſelytes, while the other did not. And if thoſe who ſerved the tabernacle, and kept to the type, when the antitype was come, had *no right* to goſpel-privileges, what are thoſe doing who will blend type and antitype together, even to this day? I never yet could obtain a direct anſwer to this queſtion, either from learned or unlearned, and if you, ſir, can give a ſatisfying one, you will much oblige your hearty friend.

ISAAC BACKUS.

MIDDLEBOROUGH, *Jan.* 28, 1772.

PROPOSALS
For printing, by SUBSCRIPTION,
A DISCOURSE

Concerning the materials, the manner of building, and the power of organizing of the church of Chriſt; with the true difference, and exact limits between civil and eccleſiaſtical governments; and alſo, what are, and what are not juſt grounds of ſeparation from a church: Together with an addreſs to JOSEPH FISH, A. M. Paſtor of a church in *Stonington*, occaſioned by his late piece, called

The EXAMINER EXAMINED.

By *ISAAC BACKUS*,

Paſtor of a church in MIDDLEBOROUGH:

Deſigned to correct what has been amiſs in the author and his brethren, as well as their opponants, and to point out the way, wherein we ſhould go.

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It is ſuppoſed that this work will contain more than one hundred pages in octavo; to be well printed, for 1s. 6d. a piece, with a ſeventh gratis to thoſe who ſubſcribe for ſix.

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Thoſe who deſire it may have this, and the author's former piece, againſt Mr. Fiſh, bound together, for three piſtareens.